

Message Text

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ORIGIN NEA-11

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O 082345Z MAY 78
FM SECSTATE WASHDC
TO AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 117373

FOR CHARGE FROM ASSISTANT SECRETARY SAUNDERS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PEPR, OEXC, SY, US

SUBJECT: PROSPECTIVE SYRIAN PARLIAMENTARY DELEGATION TO
THE U.S.

REF: DAMASCUS 1438 AND SUBSEQUENT

1. WE HAVE DETERMINED THAT CODEL ZABLOCKI DOES NOT
REGARD DISCUSSION DURING JANUARY VISIT TO DAMASCUS AS
COMMITMENT TO ISSUE FORMAL INVITATION TO SYRIAN PARLIA-
MENTARY DELEGATION. WE COULD THEORETICALLY FORCE ISSUE
BY ENLISTING REQUEST FROM SEVENTH FLOOR PRINCIPAL TO HOUSE
LEADERSHIP, BUT WE HAVE DONE SOME CHECKS AND DO NOT
BELIEVE WE COULD JUSTIFY SUCH AN EFFORT. WE HAVE STRONG
DOUBTS THAT CONGRESS WOULD BE WILLING AGREE TO ISSUE
INVITATION IN PRESENT CONGRESSIONAL SESSION.

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2. I REALIZE THIS CREATES A DELICATE PROBLEM FOR
EMBASSY VIS-A-VIS BILAL. SINCE I UNDERSTAND THAT BILAL
AND HIS COLLEAGUES WOULD PLAN TO BE IN WASHINGTON ONLY
BRIEFLY AND THAT ONE OF THE MAJOR PURPOSES OF THEIR VISIT
WOULD BE A PUBLIC RELATIONS TOUR, WE MIGHT LIMIT ANY
POTENTIAL DAMAGE BY EXPLAINING THE CONGRESSIONAL SITUATION

AND INFORMING THEM THAT WE WOULD RECEIVE THEM IN THE DEPARTMENT AND PROVIDE WHATEVER HELP WE COULD IN THEIR

ARRANGEMENTS. (FYI. IF THEY ARE PLANNING TO BE IN WASHINGTON AND WE HAVE SUFFICIENT NOTICE, WE MAY WELL BE ABLE TO ARRANGE FOR THEM TO MEET INFORMALLY WITH SELECTED MEMBERS OF THE HOUSE OR SENATE. END FYI).

3. PLEASE ARRANGE TO HAVE THE FOLLOWING MESSAGE FROM ME TO DR. BILAL DELIVERED IF YOU PERCEIVE NO OBJECTIONS:

BEGIN TEXT: DEAR DR. BILAL:

KNOWING OF YOUR INTEREST IN VISITING, WITH SEVERAL OF YOUR COLLEAGUES IN THE PEOPLE'S COUNCIL, OUR OWN CONGRESS, I HAD HOPED THAT A MUTUALLY AGREEABLE TIME FOR A FORMAL VISIT COULD BE ARRANGED. AS YOU MAY BE AWARE, HOWEVER, THE PRESENT SESSION OF CONGRESS HAS BEEN PARTICULARLY BUSY, EVEN BY THE STANDARDS OF PAST YEARS. IT HAS BEEN CONCERNED WITH FOREIGN POLICY QUESTIONS AND DOMESTIC LEGISLATION OF THE GREATEST IMPORTANCE TO THE AMERICAN PEOPLE. UNDER THESE CIRCUMSTANCES, THE MEMBERS OF CONGRESS WITH WHOM WE HAVE BEEN IN TOUCH REGRET THAT THEY COULD NOT EXTEND A FORMAL INVITATION TO THEIR SYRIAN COLLEAGUES AT THIS TIME, KNOWING THAT THEY WOULD BE UNABLE TO ACCORD TO SUCH AN IMPORTANT VISIT THE TIME AND PREPARA-
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TIONS THAT IT DESERVES.

I UNDERSTAND, HOWEVER, THAT YOU AND YOUR COLLEAGUES HAVE BEEN THINKING PRIMARILY OF A PROGRAM THAT WOULD TAKE YOU TO DIFFERENT PARTS OF THE UNITED STATES TO VISIT UNIVERSITIES AND CITIZENS GROUPS CONCERNED WITH FOREIGN POLICY. IF YOU DO PLAN SUCH A VISIT, WE IN THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE WOULD BE PLEASED AND HONORED TO MEET WITH YOU AND YOUR COLLEAGUES AND TO OFFER APPROPRIATE ASSISTANCE.

WE ATTACH HIGH IMPORTANCE TO THE DEVELOPMENT AND MAINTENANCE OF A BROAD RANGE OF CLOSE AND COOPERATIVE RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN THE GOVERNMENTS AND PEOPLES OF SYRIA AND THE UNITED STATES. ANY VISIT YOU WOULD MAKE TO OUR COUNTRY WOULD BE AN IMPORTANT ASPECT OF SUCH RELATIONSHIPS AND WOULD, I AM SURE, CONTRIBUTE SIGNIFICANTLY TO MUTUAL UNDERSTANDING.

SINCERELY, HAROLD H. SAUNDERS, ASSISTANT SECRETARY
END TEXT.

4. APPARENT SYRIAN DESIRE TO FORM A JOINT DELEGATION

WITH ALGERIANS OR OTHERS IS, HOWEVER, A COMPLICATING
FACTOR WHICH SHOULD BE DISCOURAGED. THE INCLUSION OF
MEMBERS OF THE PALESTINE NATIONAL COUNCIL (PNC) IN SUCH
A "PARLIAMENTARY" DELEGATION IS, OF COURSE, A NON-STARTER

AND WOULD MAKE IT IMPOSSIBLE FOR THE DEPARTMENT TO
PARTICIPATE IN ANY ACTIVITIES CONNECTED WITH THE VISIT. VANCE

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